

THE KING'S MOWINGS

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*"The king's mowings."
Amos 7:1*

CERTAIN lands belonged to the king, so far, that he always took the first cut of grass for himself and left any aftermath to those who worked upon the land. Now, our great King has His mowings, too. His church is the field which He has enclosed and blessed. At set seasons, the King takes His mowings. Lately, beyond any other time in my life that I remember, the King has been taking His mowings in and around the church of which He has made me overseer.

One has spent many hours at the bedsides of the dying and in trying to console the bereaved. Our loss, if I may venture to call it a loss, as a church, at the opening of this year was extremely heavy. The King has been taking His mowings among us and has cut down here one and there another. When churches commence with a great many young members, there would naturally not be so many deaths at first, but as we all grow old together, there must be a large proportion of removals from this world into the land above.

I purpose to speak a little upon that subject and I shall do so in a threefold way—first, by way of *consolation*. Then, by way of *admonition*. And then by way of *anticipation*.

I. First, by way of CONSOLATION.

It is a sorrowful matter that our beloved brethren and sisters should be taken from us. We were not more but less than men if we did not sorrow. Jesus wept and by that act He sanctified our tears. It is not wrong, it is not unmanly—much less is it sinful for us to drop the tear of sorrow over the departed—yet let us help to wipe those tears away with a handkerchief of sacred consolations.

First, seeing that "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," do you lament that the King has been mowing? Then let this thought chide you. *The King Himself has done it!* There is no such abstract thing as death—an unloosed monster devouring the saints at will—"Drinking the blood of men and grinding their bones between his iron teeth."

This is a poet's raving. No destroying angel is sent forth to slay the Israel of God. There is a destroying angel, it is true, but He comes not near those who bear the blood mark. It is not in the power of disease or accident to kill the children of God except as instruments in the divine hand. No saint dies otherwise than by the act of God.

It is always according to the King's own will—it is the King's own doing. Every ripe ear in His field is gathered by His own hand, cut down by His own golden sickle, and by none other. Every full-blown flower of grace is taken away by Him, not smitten with blight, or cut down by the tempest, or devoured by some evil beast.

*"When mortal man resigns his breath,
'Tis God directs the stroke of death;
Casual howe'er the stroke appear,
He sends the fatal messenger.
The keys are in that hand divine;
That hand must first the warrant sign,
And arm the death, and wing the dart*

Which doth His message to our heart."

The Lord has done it in every case, and knowing this, we must not even think of complaining. What the King does, His servants delight in, for He is such a King that, let Him do what seems good to Him and we will still bless Him—we are of the mind of him who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Again, *those who have been mown down and taken away are with the King*. They are the King's mowings. They are gathered into His stores. They are not in purgatory. They are not in the *limbus patrum*, much less are they in hell. They are not wandering in dreary pathways amidst the stars to find a lodging place.

Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And this prayer has fixed the saints' abode. We shall enter into no questions now about whether heaven is a place, or where it is, or whether it is merely a state—it is enough for us that where Jesus is there His people are—not some of them in lower seats, or in lower rooms, or sitting outside, but they are all where *He* is.

That will certainly content me. And if there be any degrees in glory, you who want the high ones may have them. The lowest degree that I can perceive in Scripture is, "that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory"—and that lowest degree is as high as my most vivid imagination can carry me. Here is enough to fill our souls even to the brim.

And now do you sorrow for those who are with Christ where He is? Do you not almost blame your tears when you learn that your beloved ones are promoted to such blissful scenes? Why, mother, did you ever wish for your child a higher place than that it should be where Jesus is? Husband, by the love you bore your wife, you cannot grudge her the glory into which she has entered. Wife, by the deep devotion of your heart to him who has been taken from you, you could not wish to have detained him a moment from the joy in which his soul now triumphs with his Lord. If he were gone to some unknown land, if you could stand on life's brink, and hear the roaring billows of a dread mysterious ocean and say, "My dear one has gone, I know not whither, to be tossed like a waif or stray upon yonder tempestuous sea," oh, then you might mix your own tears with the brine of that ocean.

But you know where they are, you know with whom they are and you can form some idea, by the joy of Christ's presence here on earth, what must be their bliss above.

*"Sounds of sweet melody fall on my ears;
Harps of the blessed, your music I hear!
Rings with the harmony heaven's high dome,
Joyfully, joyfully bring the saints home."*

It is a sweet reflection, too, that although our dear friends have been cut down like flowers by the scythe, yet *their lot is better than ours*, though we are standing and blooming today. Life seems better than death and the living dog is better than the dead lion—but take into account the everlasting state—and who will dare to say that the state of the blessed is worse than ours? Will not all assert that it is infinitely superior?

We are suffering still, but they shall smart no more. We are weak and tottering here, but they have regained the dew of their youth. We know what want means, and wipe the sweat of toil from off our face, but they rest in abundance forever. The worst of all is, that we still sin and have to wrestle hard with doubts and fears. Satan still besets us, the world is around us, and corruptions fester within us.

But they are where not a wave of trouble can ever break the serenity of their spirit. They are beyond the barking of the hell-dogs and beyond the arrows of hell's quiver, though there are archers who would shoot their darts into heaven itself if they could. The ingathered ones are supremely blest. They are far

beyond what we are in joy, and knowledge, and holiness. Therefore, if we love them, how can we mourn that they have gone from the worse to the better—and from the lower to the higher room?

And moreover, brethren, although some of you sorrow very bitterly because God has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, let me remind you that *you might have had a worse sorrow than this concerning them*. Ah, the mother who has to mourn over a grown-up son who has become a profligate, has a bitterer pang a thousand times over than she has who seen her infant carried to the grave. The father who knows that his sons or daughters have become a dishonor to his name may well wish that he had long ago seen them laid in the silent tomb.

And I have known men, in the church, whom I would sooner have buried a thousand times over than have lived to see what I have afterwards seen in them. For years they stood as honorable professors—but they lived to dishonor the church, to blaspheme their Lord, to go back into perdition, and prove that the root of the matter was never in them.

Oh, you need not weep for those in heaven. Weep not for the dead, neither bewail them—but weep for the spiritually dead—weep for the apostate and backslider. Weep for the false professor and the hypocrite—“the wandering stars,” “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” If you have tears, go and shed them there—but for those who have fought the fight and won the victory, for those who have stemmed the stream and safely landed on the other side—let us have no tears.

Nay, put away the sackbut, and bring forth the clarion, let the trumpet ring out jubilantly the note of victory. It is to them the day of jubilee—why should it be for us the hour of sorrow? They put on the crown and bear the palm branch in their hands—wherefore should we don the funeral weeds? There is infinitely more to rejoice in than there is to sorrow for. Therefore, let our hearts be glad. The Lord has said to them, “Well done,” and rewarded them according to His grace, and this is infinitely better than that they should have lived to slip and slide.

“But this is poor comfort,” you will say, and therefore let me come back to the text and say that *the King has taken His mowings*. Sorrowful as we may be, it is not the worst sorrow that we could have, but whether or no, we must not grudge the King any whom He takes from us. All the friends we have are lent us. The old proverb says, “A loan should go laughing home,” that is, we should never be unwilling to return a loan, but cheerfully give it back to the lender.

Our dear ones were lent to us and what a blessing they have been to us! The lamps of our house, have they been the joy of our day? The Master says, “I want them back again,” and do we clutch at them and say, “No, Master, You shall not have them”? Oh, it must not be so. Our dear ones were never half as much ours as they were Christ's. We did not make them, but *He* did. We never bought them with our blood, but *He* did. We never sweat a bloody sweat for them, nor had our hands and feet pierced for them, but *He* did.

They were lent to us, but they belonged to Him. Your prayer was, “Father, let them be with me where I am,” but Christ's prayer was, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” Your prayer pulled one way and Christ's pulled another. Be not envious that Christ won the suit. If I ever enter into the Lord's Court of Chancery, if I find that Christ is on the other side, my Lord, I will not plead. You shall have Your will, for I and You and You and I are one—and if it be Your plea that all I love may be with You, so be it, for I shall be with You too, ere long, and I would not quarrel with Your wish.

The King has let out this church like a pasture to us and He says, “I must take My mowings sometimes.” Well, He has so watered us and given us the smell of a field that the Lord God has blessed, that when He comes and takes His rent, we may not stand at the gate and forbid Him, but say, “Good Master, come and take which You will. Take your quit-rent, for the field is all Your own. You have dearly purchased it and You have tilled it with much diligence—take what You will, for it is Yours.”

And let me add, to increase our comfort, that *the King took His mowings at the right time*. Out of those whom He has taken away from us, I think we must all confess that the Lord took them when they

should be taken. In one case, a venerable sister, who if she had lasted longer, would have been the prey of weakness and of pain—'twas well she fell asleep.

In another case, a dear young friend was pining under that fell disease, consumption—her throat was scarcely able to receive nourishment—I think those who loved her best must have felt relieved when at last she fell asleep. Two brethren rise before my mind's eye—the one struggled through life and wondered often that he did not sink before, for he was like a ship unfit for sea, which every wave threatens to engulf. It is a wonder that he survived as long as he did. He served his Lord up to the last and when all was over, it was well.

Another, whom I saw with an afflicting disease about him that had brought him very low, had led so gracious a life that he did not need to utter any dying testimony. Brethren beloved, also, who were once with us in the College have fallen asleep, having finished their course and kept the faith.

I may add that, not only did the King take His mowings at the right time, but in every case I have now before my mind, *He took them in the easiest way*. He took them gently. Some have a hard fight for it at the last, but in these cases, though there were pains and dying strife, yet at the last their souls were kissed away by the dear lips of Him who named them by their names and said they were His. They fell asleep, some of them so sweetly that those who looked on scarcely knew whether it was the sleep of life or the deeper sleep of eternity.

They were gone—they were gone at once to their Lord and their God. Putting all these things together—reflecting that the King has done it, that those He has taken away He has taken to be with Himself that their present lot is an infinitely better one than anything beneath the moon, considering, too, that we must never grudge the King the heritage which He has so dearly bought, and that He took His mowings at the right time and took them in the happiest manner—we will no longer repine, but we will bless the Lord.

II. And now, brethren, suffer me for a few minutes to use the subject by way of ADMONITION.

I hardly know whether, under this head, I have grouped together thoughts that are quite admonitory. The first one is to be very joyous. It is this—that *as we belong to the King, our hope is that we shall be mown too*. We are sitting on the banks of Jordan, especially some of us who are of riper years, waiting for a summons to the court of the Eternal King.

It becomes a wonder sometimes, with aged Christians, why they stay here so long. John Newton, I think, used to marvel at his own age. And Rowland Hill used to say that he half imagined they had forgotten him—and hoped they would soon remember him and send for him. Well, we have not quite gone that length—we who are young—but still we entertain the hope that, some fair evening, calm and bright, the angel reaper will come with the scythe.

Then shall we, having fulfilled, like the hireling, our day, lay down our tools of labor and take our rest. Then shall we put down our sword, take off our breastplate, and unloose the shoes of iron and brass, for we shall fight no more, but take the palm and claim the victory before the throne.

Never let us look forward to this with dread. It is wondrous that we should do so, and we would not if our faith were stronger. When faith vividly realizes the rest that remains for the people of God, we are tempted to long to be up and away. Then why should we wish to linger here? What is there in this old musty worn-out world—worm-eaten and full of holes, with its very gold and silver cankered—that can satisfy an immortal spirit?

Let us away to the hills of spices and to the mountains of frankincense, where the King in His beauty stands with “helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim” and all the hosts that serve Him day and night, to behold His face, and evermore adore Him. Let us anticipate cheerfully the time when the King's mowings shall include us also.

Brethren, the admonition that arises out of all this is, *let us be ready*. Should not every Christian live every day as if he were going to die that day? Should we not always live as if we knew our last hour to be at the door? If a man, in his right state, were informed all a sudden, “You will die tonight,” he ought

not to have to alter his mode of life one atom. He should be so living that he had nothing more to do but to continue his course.

It is remarked of Bengel, the great critic, that “he did not wish to die in spiritual parade, but in the ordinary way—like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business—so much so that he was occupied with the collection of his proof-sheets at his dying season, as at other times.” To me, it seems to be the very highest kind of death to die in harness—concluding life without suspending service.

Alas, many are unready and would be sadly put about if the midnight cry were suddenly heard. Oh, let us see that everything is in order! Both for this world and the next nothing should be left to be hurried over in the last few hours. Christian man, is your will made? Are your business affairs all straight? They ought to be—everything ought to be as nearly as you can keep it in perfect order, so that you are ready to go at any minute.

Mr. George Whitefield used to so live in anticipation of death that he said, “I never go to sleep at night with even a pair of gloves out of place.” Oh, that we would be habitually ready and in order—especially in higher matters—walking before the Lord, as preparing to meet Him!

Then, dear friends, this departure of many of our fellow workers, while it admonishes us to be going, to go, at the same time *teaches us to do twice as much while we are here, seeing that our numbers are being so constantly thinned*. A brave soldier, in the day of battle, if he hears that a regiment has been exterminated by the enemies shot and shell, says, “Then those of us that survive must fight all the more bravely. There is no room for us to play at fighting. If they have slain so many, we must be more desperately valiant.”

And so, today, if one here or there is gone, a useful worker from the Sabbath schools, or from the street preaching, then it is time our broken ranks were repaired. O you young men, I pray you, fill up the gap. And you young women who love the Savior, if a Sabbath school teacher is gone, and you are teaching, teach better, or if you are not teaching, come and fill the place.

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray for recruits. I stand like a commander in the midst of my little army and see some of the best smitten down—here one and there one—and what can I do but, as my Master bids me, lead you on and say, “Brethren and sisters, step into their places. Fill the gaps in the ranks.”

Do not let death gain upon us, but even as one goes into the golden city, let another cry, “Here I am. Call me also to my reward.” As for us who are at work, we must labor more zealously than ever, we must pray more fervently than ever. When a certain great man suddenly died in the ministry, I remember, in my young days, an old preacher saying, “I must preach better than ever I did now that Mr. So-and-so is gone.” And you, Christian, whenever a saint is removed, say, “I must live the better to make up to the church the loss which it has sustained.”

One other thought, by way of admonition. *If the King has been taking His mowings, then the King's eye is upon His church*. He has not forgotten this field, for He has been mowing it. We have been praying lately that He would visit us. He has come, He has come! Not quite as we expected Him, but He has come, He has come!

Oh yes, and as He has walked these aisles and looked on this congregation, He has taken first one, and then another. He has not taken me, for I am not ready. And He has not taken you, for you are not quite ripe—but He has taken away some that were ripe and ready—and they have gone to be with Him where He is.

Well, then, He has not forgotten us, and this ought to stimulate us in prayer. He will hear us, His eye is upon us. This ought to stimulate us to self-examination. Let us purge out everything that will grieve Him. He is evidently watching us. Let us seek to live as in His presence, that nothing may vex His Spirit and cause Him to withdraw from us.

Beloved, these are the words of admonition.

III. And now, a few more words by way of ANTICIPATION.

I hardly know under what head to place them. What anticipations are there that come out of the mowing?

Why these. *There is to be an after-growth.* After the King's mowings, there came another springing up of fresh grass, which belonged to the King's tenants. So we expect, now that the King has been mowing, that we shall have a fresh crop of grass. Is there not a promise, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses?" Fresh converts will come and who will they be?

Well, I look around, but I will not say, with Samuel, as I look at some young man in the gallery, "Surely the LORD hath chosen him." Neither will I look down to someone in that area and say, "Surely the LORD hath chosen *him*," but I will bless God that I know He has chosen some and that He means to make this fresh grass spring up to fill up the vacuum caused by the King's mowings.

Do you know who I should like to come if I might have my preference? Well, where the daughter has died, how glad I should be if the father came, or the brother came. And where the father has died, how I would be rejoiced if the son should come. And where a good woman has been taken away, how glad would I be if her husband filled up the place!

It seems to me as if it were natural to wish that those who loved them best should occupy their position and discharge their work for them. But if that cannot be, I stand here tonight as a recruiting sergeant. My King in His wars has lost some of His men and the regiment wants making up. Who will come? I put the colors in my hat tonight, but I will not stand here and tempt you with lies about the ease of the service, for it is hard service. Yet I assure you that we have a blessed Leader, a glorious conflict and a grand reward.

Who will come? Who will come to fill up the gaps in the ranks? Who will be baptized for the dead, to stand in their place of Christian service, and take up the torch which they have dropped? I will pass the question round and I hope that many a heart will say, "Oh, that the Lord would have me! Oh, that He would blot out my sins and receive me!"

He delights in contrite hearts. He saves such as be of a contrite spirit. He will save whom He will have, but the way to be enlisted is plain. "Oh!" say you, "what must I give to be Christ's soldier?" To be the queen's soldier, you do not give anything—you receive a shilling. You *take*, in order to be a soldier of the queen, and so, to be Christ's soldier, you must take Christ to be your All-in-all, holding out your empty hand and receiving of His blood and righteousness to be your hope and your salvation. Oh, that His good Spirit would sweetly incline your wills that one after another might be made willing in the day of His power! May He thus do—and our hearts will greatly rejoice.

As I read the passage in Amos from which I have taken my text, I noticed something about caterpillars. (The marginal reading calls them "green worms"). It is said that after the King's mowings, there came the caterpillars to eat up the after growth. Oh, those caterpillars! When the poor Eastern husbandman sees the caterpillars, his heart is ready to break, for he knows that they will eat up every green thing.

And I can see the caterpillars here tonight. There is the great green caterpillar that eats up all before him—I wish I could crush him. He is called the caterpillar of procrastination. There are many, many other worms and locusts which eat up much, but this worm of procrastination is the worst, for just as the green blade is beginning to spring up, this caterpillar begins to eat.

I can hear him gnawing, "Wait, wait, wait. Tomorrow, tomorrow. A little more sleep, a little more sleep, a little more sleep." And so this caterpillar devours our hopes. Lord, destroy the caterpillar and grant that, instead of the fathers, may be the children. Instead of the King's mowings, may there come up the after-growth who shall be a rich reward to the husbandman and bring glory to the Owner of the soil!

We have reason to pray that the Lord would send the dew and the rain to bring forth the after-growth. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." Now this congregation is like mown grass. God has mown it—a rich mowing has the King taken from us. Now, my brethren, we have the

promise—let us plead it before the throne. All the preaching in the world cannot save a soul, nor all the efforts of men. But God's Spirit can do everything.

Oh that He would come down like rain upon the mown grass now! Then shall we see the handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains multiply till its fruit shall shake like Lebanon and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. The Lord send it, the Lord send it now!

If any would be saved, here is the way of salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To believe is to trust. What you have to trust in is this—that Jesus is God, that He became man, that He suffered in the sinner's place, and that whosoever believes in Him shall be forgiven, because God has punished Christ instead of believers. Christ bore God's wrath instead of every sinner that ever did or ever shall believe in Him. And if you believe in Him, you were redeemed from among men. His substitution was for you and it will save you.

But if you believe not, you have no part or lot in this matter. Oh, that you were brought to put your trust in Jesus! This would be the pledge of your sure salvation tonight and forevermore. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

REVELATION 21

Verse 1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Astronomers tell us that within living memory several starry worlds have burnt out and vanished out of sight. The apostle Peter has told us that this world will be destroyed by fire, but it will afterwards be renewed, and a new sky and a new earth will appear after the first firmament and the first earth shall have become extinct.

God means that this planet should continue to exist after it has had a new creation and renewed its youth. The regeneration of His people, their new birth, is a foretaste of what is yet to happen to this whole world of ours. We have the first fruits of the Spirit and we groan within ourselves while we wait for the fullness of that new creation.

"The first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," because the sea is the emblem of separation, and destruction, and unrest. The sea has her dead who shall be given up. The sea cannot now rest nor be quiet, but all shall be calm and tranquil in the new heaven and the new earth.

2. *And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

John saw, in vision, the glorified church of God coming to dwell on the new earth, descending for a while from heaven to be the very glory of the newly-created world.

3-4. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

When there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and the church shall be in her new and glorified condition, then there will be no need for all those purifying forces which have been so active here below. There shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor trial of any kind—all shall be happiness for all shall be holiness.

And then, as God dwelt of old among His people in the wilderness, and as Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, so in that new world shall God reveal Himself to His people by a special indwelling and a peculiar nearness.

5. *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.* [See sermon #1816, Sermon for a New Year's Day] ***And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.***

Once, the Lord might have said, "Behold, I make all things," but now He says, "Behold, I make all things new." Glory be unto the great Creator! Did not the morning stars sing together for joy when He made the world? But equal if not greater glory must be ascribed to the great Regenerator, the New Creator. Shall we not all sing together to His praise? Yes, that we shall if we are numbered among the "all things" that He makes new.

6. *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* [See sermon #1549, Good News for Thirsty Souls]

Probably John did not expect to hear that sweet Gospel message just then. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of lofty themes, of worlds newly made, and yet in the very middle of it all He puts this gracious promise. Let this be a pattern to all of you who are preachers or teachers—no matter what your subject may be, a Gospel promise or invitation is always in place and in season. You may put it among the most golden sentences like a precious stone in a setting of pure gold and it will never be out of order come when it may.

Men hate God without the slightest reason for doing so and God loves men without the slightest reason—there is every reason why men should love God, and not hate Him—yet they have hated Him without a cause. And there is every reason why God should hate man and not love him—yet He loves us so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to die, that whosoever believes in Him may live forever.

7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

What a wonderful word is that! "He shall be my son"—not My servant, but "my son." God give us the faith to rise to this more than royal dignity! "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

8. *But the fearful,*

No, that is not the right word, it is the cowardly, for there are many who are full of fear who are nevertheless most sincere and right in God's sight. "But the cowardly,"

8. *And unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers,*

And the apostle John tells us that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer,"

8. *And whoremongers,*

Unchaste and unclean men and women,

8. *And sorcerers,*

Persons who profess to have communications with the dead, necromancers, spiritualists, and all people of that sort,

8. *And idolaters,*

That is, all who love anyone or anything more than God,

8. *And all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

That is the death that never dies—the death which is far more to be dreaded than the death of the body.

9. *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

John had already caught a glimpse of "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." And now this angelic messenger bids him come nearer, and look more closely into this mysterious and glorious city "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

10-13. *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of*

the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

God's church glorified lies open to all quarters of the infinitude of space. It is no prison of souls that dare not go beyond its borders, but a many-gated city, so that the blessed spirits there can fly whithersoever they will.

14. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Not Peter only, but the whole of the twelve apostles shall have their names in the foundations of that holy city.

15-16. *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

It seems at first to be astounding that the height of a city should be equal to the length and the breadth of it, but if you have traveled in Italy, you must have seen many a city, perched upon a hill, which seemed to be even higher than it was broad or long, if you included the wall of the city and the houses one above another right up to the loftiest minaret or tower. Yes, like a priceless square casket made all of costly jewels is this wondrous city, equally glorious whichever way you look at it. "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

17-18. *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

Such gold as never was, nor is, nor ever shall be on this earth until that time when God shall have purified it. Our gold is dull, opaque—light is blocked out by it. How many might see if it were not for the gold which blinds them and hides the truth from them!

19-20. *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

You know that the stones of which this holy city is built are living stones. You and I, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be there—living stones prepared by living grace to have a name and a place in this living city. But what changes will have to be wrought in us before we are fit to be put among these precious jewels!

We are like poor blocks of common-looking stone, but we do not know what we shall be like when we have been cut and polished on the great Lapidary's wheel. You may take a precious stone to a jeweler and ask him what its value is, but he will say, "I cannot tell what it is worth until it has been cut and polished." That is how the Lord will prove the value of His living stones. If He will but work upon us by His grace, we cannot tell what He will make of us before He places us in the position He has appointed for us in the glorious city that rests upon these twelve precious foundations.

21. *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

John had already said that "the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass" and now he says that "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." We do not always get such a combination as this here below, gold, precious and pure, yet unstained with blood, and undimmed with the oppression of the poor—diaphanous gold, "as it were transparent glass."

22-23. *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* [See sermon #583, The Lamb—The Light]

Yes, and the glorified church herself, because of this light, sheds such a bright light on all within her that all the saints rejoice in her light.

24-25. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

Shut gates signify war—open gates mean peace. There shall be no more fear of war, no Gog and Magog to gather together to battle, no Armageddon to be dreaded by the glorified church of Christ, which shall be in perfect peace forever.

26-27. *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* [See sermon #1590, The Barrier]

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